

Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu City of New Orleans

"State of the City: Laying a Strong Foundation for the Future"

Civic Theatre Thursday, July 6, 2017

\*Remarks as prepared for delivery\*
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Thank you all for coming.

Seven years ago, I gave my first State of the City address called "Eyes Wide Open." The basic message was that we inherited a mess and we needed to change course. Those were uncertain, chaotic times.

A \$97 million" deficit threatened to put our city into bankruptcy. Our police department was already broke and dysfunctional. The recovery was stalled have many of our schools, hospitals, grocery stores, community centers, parks, playgrounds, and public housing were not yet back.

We led the nation in blighted property<sup>v</sup> and FEMA trailers still dotted the city<sup>vi</sup>. The federal government had taken over the Housing Authority<sup>vii</sup> and the state had taken over our schools<sup>viii</sup>. And although there was so much to do.... in 2010 City Hall was only open 4 days per week<sup>ix</sup> and red tape<sup>x</sup> was choking us to death.

The Department of Justice with the FBI zeroed in on both City Hall corruption<sup>xi</sup> and police misconduct<sup>xii</sup>. The BP Oil Spill was a dagger to the heart<sup>xiii</sup> of our land<sup>xiv,xv</sup>, food<sup>xvi,xvii</sup>, businesses<sup>xviii</sup> and jobs<sup>xix</sup>. And all the while, our working people suffered the terrible effects of the great recession, along with the rest of America.

It was a mess of epic proportions. But just when it seemed like all was lost... the people of New Orleans stepped up and with one voice they demanded unity, action, reform, results - one team, one fight, one voice, one city, one step at a time.

This is not just a slogan anymore: it has become a state of being for us. To be strong in an uncertain world, we know that for all things, everybody needs to be **all in**.

Our <u>strength is in our unity</u>; our strength is in our diversity: our strength is in our culture. E pluribus unum – out of many, one. And we are better for it.

That's the new New Orleans way - all in, everybody together. Sharing opportunity, sharing responsibility. Federal, state and local government at the table. Private sector, non-profits and faith based organizations at the table. Citizens at the table.

Hand in hand, we run towards the fire, seeking out solutions for our city's entrenched issues; standing tall in the face of the storm -- doing what is difficult for the sake of what is right.

## But no one said this was going to be easy.

It's hard to fix a broken city and a broken spirit. It's hard to go from the top of the bad lists to the top of the good lists. It's hard to stay focused on the future - making tough decisions today, so that the next Mayor and City Council can have the benefit of choosing between good, better and best; and not between bad and worse.

So, in this, our final year in office, we will cement the strong foundation we have built for the future, while also staying focused on the challenges that continue to hold us back. We will finish strong.

In 7 years, we have righted the ship of government, going from a budget deficit to a budget surplus<sup>xxi</sup>, and the highest credit rating in city history<sup>xxii</sup>. In 7 years, we led the fight against <u>corruption</u>, opening the doors of opportunity for everyone by completely reforming our city's contracting process.<sup>xxiii,xxiv</sup> Here is the goal - a level playing field for contracts so that <u>now</u> it is about <u>what</u> you know, not <u>who</u> you know.

At the same time, in the last 7 years, we reformed Civil Service<sup>xxv</sup> so that City Hall is open, welcoming and works for you- the people of New Orleans. And to become a better place to work, we increased the minimum wage to \$10.55 per hour<sup>xxvi</sup> and paid family leave<sup>xxvii</sup> for all City employees.

We are also building the best recreation department in America. We've turned around NORD<sup>xxviii</sup> by nearly tripling funding<sup>xxix</sup> for recreation programs and we're investing over \$150 million<sup>xxx</sup> to rebuild community centers, pools, gyms and playgrounds. Because we've done so well, for the first time NORD is on track to become nationally accredited - that will be a big milestone.

At the same time, we are investing \$2 billion to rebuild or renovate every school in the city and for the first time since Hurricane Katrina, the schools will soon be back under local control. Our teachers, our principals, and students are doing great work. Graduation rates since Katrina are way up to propose are down to college than ever before and for those not going to college we are working to connect them to jobs the schildren and as adults.

For too long our young people after finishing school had to go elsewhere for opportunity and jobs. Today, unemployment has been nearly cut in half since its peak in 2010<sup>xxxvi</sup> and over 7 years our more vibrant economy has created 20,000 new jobs<sup>xxxvii</sup> and opened up more than 140 new retail businesses<sup>xxxviii</sup>. If you don't believe me, come see me at Costco this Sunday.

But we're not only growing jobs in the hospitality and retail sectors. We're creating jobs of the future. The NOLA Business Alliance<sup>xxxix</sup>, which we started, is helping to build new industries like biomedical, digital media, and water management. And the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, which we brought here<sup>xl</sup>, has helped more than 500 of our small business owners in New Orleans which represent over half a billion dollars in revenue and support more than 8,000 jobs across the region.<sup>xli</sup>

At the same time, 675 new DBEs have been certified to get tens of millions of dollars in city work. And finally, our workforce development program STRIVE in partnership with Sewerage and Water Board and Delgado have trained hundreds of residents and are putting folks back to work. That way when your street is getting dug up, you know it's one of our own doing the work.

We want the people of New Orleans to be the ones to rebuild New Orleans and everyone should share in the opportunity and prosperity. That's why our team is focused on equity<sup>x|v|</sup> and is instituting an equity lens in our entire budgeting process. That's why we are investing in new bus lines<sup>x|v||</sup> and new streetcars.<sup>x|v|||,x||x</sup>

And that's why we're investing in affordable housing. All told, by 2018, <u>because</u> we've had a relentless focus on housing; <u>because</u> we did the hard work bringing the housing authority out of federal receivership<sup>l</sup>; <u>because</u> we launched our Housing for a Resilient New Orleans plan<sup>li</sup>//nearly 7,800 homes<sup>lii</sup> will have been completed or are in progress. And there is more on the way.

Homelessness is now down by 80% iii, iv and we were the first city in America to functionally end veteran homelessness v. But we clearly have more work to do, so we're building a new low barrier homeless shelter at the old VA hospital. vi

And that's not the only long-envisioned project finally coming to fruition in this city. The Lafitte Greenway<sup>lvii</sup> is blowing and going<sup>lviii</sup>. And now housing, retail, bars and restaurants are popping up along the 3.1-mile linear park.

The University Medical Center, and the VA and the New Orleans East Hospital have opened in the past few years. And now there is a biomedical corridor in the heart of New Orleans and a new asset in the East that can provide jobs for our residents and great health care.

We're redeveloping the World Trade Center for a new Four Seasons.

A new blockbuster deal with the Port and Public Belt<sup>lix</sup> will open up a 3-mile contiguous stretch of the riverfront, from Poland Avenue to Spanish Plaza. And a new multi-million dollar ferry terminal at the base of Canal Street will soon break ground, with two new pedestrian ferries<sup>lx</sup> to boot. We will have the best front porch in America.

Plus, after decades of starts and stops, your new \$1 billion<sup>lxi</sup> airport is coming out of the ground as we speak. It will continue to be a major economic engine for this city and region for the future.

And yes, after decades of public debate, we took down four confederate monuments<sup>|xii|</sup> that were put up years after the Civil War to revere the lost cause of the Confederacy.

This was a very important step forward in our long road to bring everyone together to build the city we always dreamed we could be.

All of these major initiatives and projects, some generations in the making are actually happening. We're moving forward.

Not to mention another nearly \$1 billion in new city projects from Rosenwald Center in Central City to Gernon Brown Gym in Lakeview, the Lyons Center Uptown, the Algiers Regional Library, and the Treme Center... just to name a few.

And because we did the hard work re-negotiating with FEMA over hurricane damage, we've also fixed more streets in 7 years than any previous administration Over 133 miles of streets fixed Nixiv, with work done on basically every major thoroughfare; an unprecedented nearly \$500 million invested. And there is much more to come – we have planned and funded over \$400 million in street and infrastructure repairs per year for the next five years.

We've rebuilt this city, with a special focus on neighborhoods hit hardest by the storm. That's why in 8 years over \$900 million has been invested in New Orleans East and \$675 million laviii in Lower Nine - in total, over \$1.5 billion.

We've already talked about the new \$143 million hospital in the East, but don't forget the tens of millions for Joe Brown Park, the New Orleans East Library, the 7<sup>th</sup> District Police Station, Village de L'est playground lxix. There is also the Sanchez Center in Lower Nine, and Oliver Bush Playground, and fire stations #10, #22, #31, #36, #39. lxx

Not to mention eight new schools costing \$250 million. Not to mention all the big time ongoing street repairs.

New Orleans is not New Orleans without Lower Nine and the East. Like with every one of our neighborhoods - we need them and they need us. And in 2018 as we celebrate our 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a city of neighborhoods, we can look around and with pride and say:

<u>Yes</u>, we are America's greatest comeback story. <u>Yes</u>, we are showing the way for the rest of the nation. <u>Yes</u>, we have changed for the better. <u>Yes</u>, we are truly creating the city we always dreamed we could be.

Today it is undeniable that the next Mayor, City Council and the people of this city will take over a much more prepared and prosperous city than what we inherited in 2010; a city with a much stronger foundation.

## And for the first time in generations our beloved city has the tools that it needs to win the future.

But with our eyes wide open, let me be clear - we're still not where we need to be. It is as the Haitian proverb says, "beyond the mountain, is another mountain."

More work, more sacrifice is needed to address a number of ongoing challenges in this city concerning jobs, schools, housing, streets, infrastructure and so much more. And there is no doubt that together we can continue to make progress. There are solutions if we have the courage to lead.

But all those other issues, all of them, are dwarfed by two existential and immediate threats at our door.

First, we have to remember, understand and know that New Orleans is a coastal city. We are in fact surrounded by water. Our land is sinking<sup>lxxii</sup>, the coast is eroding<sup>lxxiii</sup>, the sea is rising<sup>lxxiv</sup> and weather patterns<sup>lxxv</sup> are changing rapidly and dramatically.

In the wake of our federal government pulling out of the Paris agreement, cities are taking the lead on climate change. And no other city in the world has more at stake than New Orleans. So tomorrow we will release our own Climate Action Strategy, which includes 25 actions that will cut our emissions in half by 2030, while also creating new jobs for the future.

However, in New Orleans we need to go a step further, not only to address the global problem of climate change, but also the grave challenge of restoring the coast. Anything less would be a betrayal to future generations.

The wetlands that provide New Orleans protection from storms and define our food, culture and economy are disappearing faster than anywhere else in the world. But unfortunately, the debate over coastal restoration has presented false choices. We shouldn't have to choose between our homes our land OR our jobs.

If we drill, we have to conserve. If we drill, we have to restore. Or else there will be nothing left for the future. Kindergarten rules apply. Fix what you break; clean up what you mess up.

But as threatening as the disappearing coast and climate change is to our city's long-term future, of course, the most difficult, the most immediate, and the most urgent issue we face is <u>violent crime</u>. There is no more important issue for us to totally rally around as a city.

When I was running for Mayor in 2010, I said that I knew 'what to do and how to do it.' Over the last 7 years, we've done everything and more to fight this urgent and growing threat of violent crime.

First, we realized that in order to be effective, we needed to improve the relationship between the police and community, because trust is the most important thing. In the wake of Danziger and Henry Glover murders and cover ups, and after a decade of dysfunction, the NOPD needed reform to build trust.

That's why we partnered with the Department of Justice on the most sweeping police consent decree in this nation's history. We were one of the first in the nation to adopt body cameras. We created an <u>early warning system system that red-flags struggling officers</u>. We instituted more and better <u>training</u> not only for recruits, but all officers. Ixxviii, Ixxix And as we reformed the police department, we have also invested. Ixxx

Since 2010, funding for NOPD is up by over \$30 million per year... that is about a 25% increase. In 7 years we've spent over \$2.25 billion on public safety and preparedness.

We are aggressively recruiting |xxxiii|, moving officers from behind desks to the streets, backfilling those spots with new civilians |xxxiv|. Plus new technology is helping NOPD; that means – more crime cameras, more license plate readers to catch wanted criminals, enhanced lighting, and enhanced analytics to improve deployment, which improves response times. |xxxv|

This work has been painful, it has been tedious, it has been expensive, but we are going to have a better department and a safer city in the long run because of it. And people are noticing the improvement. Public satisfaction with NOPD is way up: from 33% in 2009 to 64%, which is an all-time high. Ixxxvi

But at the same time, the people of New Orleans know that NOPD alone cannot solve all our problems — in particular shootings and murder. Even in 1999, when murder was at its lowest rate over the last 30 years and we had the most police officers on the beat; our rate was **STILL** six times the national average. IXXXXVII

We need to think about that holistically. We need to get at the <u>root cause</u> of these crimes.

So that's why, in 2012, we launched NOLA FOR LIFE, a truly comprehensive murder reduction strategy. NOLA FOR LIFE is built on the idea that we need to give our young people hope so that they do not feel forsaken, but also make sure there are serious consequences when they make bad decisions. It includes a focus not just on intervention <u>after the fact</u>, but on prevention and interrupting the cycle of violence, <u>before the fact</u>.

As part of that, the NOLA FOR LIFE Group Violence Reduction Strategy combines local, state and federal enforcement under one umbrella to give our young men in gangs and groups a clear choice—either stop the shooting and take our help or go to jail. With the very aggressive, smart enforcement policies being carried out by our Multi-Agency Gang Unit we have gotten 134 indictments from 15 different violent gangs and groups. And one of the most dangerous, the Young Melph Mafia, were just convicted and will go to jail for a long time.

But it is just as important to get on the front end; we've done more than just invest in recreation. NOLA FOR LIFE initiatives have helped over 32,000 New Orleanians get assistance (xxxviii), whether it is finding a job or returning home after being released from prison.

As a part of that, Ceasefire New Orleans has focused specifically on interrupting violence in Central City by mediating neighborhood beefs that threaten to turn violent. We've also launched a wildly successful Midnight Basketball program, which on Saturday nights has brought in off the streets over 8000 young people and spectators And our Health Department is working with the Children's Bureau and other local partners including our schools to connect high-risk kids to caseworkers and counseling that can help them work through their often serious problems. The program is a partner of the problems of the problems.

NOLA FOR LIFE also recognizes that high-crime goes hand in hand with low-opportunity. So out of this basic truth our economic opportunity strategy connects our young, unemployed men, ex-offenders, and others to training and then to work.

But let's be honest, we are just beginning and need to do so much more; because here is the truth. If our young people don't have good opportunities; if there is no other path to real prosperity than crime and drugs, we will continue to be cursed with the same violence we have seen for generations.

In recent years, we've knocked down the percentage of African American men not working from 52% to 44%<sup>xci</sup>. But to keep driving that down, really the whole system needs to change – social and economic.

And another major piece of the puzzle is criminal justice reform.

The hangover from Jim Crow is a criminal justice system that disproportionately impacts people of color and the poor. Now there is a bipartisan national movement to reorient the system to focus on violent crime, moving away from jailing people for petty offenses, which breaks up families, destabilizes communities and hurts more than it helps.

For generations, we've had more people in prison in Louisiana than anywhere else in the free world AND we've typically had more crime than anywhere else; highest incarceration rate<sup>xcii</sup> and one of the highest violent crime rates<sup>xciii</sup>.

Something is not working and with 63% of the city's \$614 million general fund budget going to public safety and preparedness<sup>xciv</sup>; it is costing us a fortune. This is not sustainable. That is why <u>all</u> elected officials, and I mean <u>all</u>, need to get on the same page regarding criminal justice reform. This is about being tough on crime AND smart on crime. We can do both. And we are.

We are nowhere close to where we want or need to be, but in 7 years we have implemented a series of reforms concerning the use of summons for non-violent offenders<sup>xcv</sup>, pre-trial services<sup>xcvi</sup>, building a right sized and constitutional jail<sup>xcvii</sup>, robust reentry services, and juvenile justice reform<sup>xcviii</sup>. So making the city safe is about more than police, prisons and guns. It is about improving schools, investing in recreation, investing in prevention.

For example, last year in New Orleans the opioid epidemic took more lives than murder. It is one of the drivers behind the spike in crime. So in the coming weeks, we will lay out a strategy to deal with this national crisis.

But I understand that long-term solutions aren't enough. They're not enough for you and they are not enough for me. No one is happy with where we are. People are afraid and I understand the impatience and the fear given the surge of violent crime in recent months. It's very disturbing. It is totally unacceptable.

One of the greatest lessons I learned as your mayor is that after so many decades of violence and dysfunction, old patterns of behavior are hard to break no matter how much you throw at it. But the easy thing to do is to point fingers and to start blaming each other.

And while the question of fault could go on forever, the question of responsibility can be resolved today by all of us. We are <u>all</u> responsible. There is no quick fix; no simple solution that can permanently improve everything. If there were, after over five decades of high crime someone would have already found it and done it by now.

So in the short term, we are doubling down and we're fighting back aggressively. Here is what we are doing.

We're further upping overtime in our most affected neighborhoods so there are more cops doing pro-active, aggressive policing targeting drug dealers and violent criminals.

We're also beefing up partnerships with other agencies that are already in the fight - from the universities and US Marshalls to the state police and probation and parole.

NOPD has also expanded the TIGER armed robbery<sup>xcix</sup> unit to focus on gun violence<sup>c</sup>. And because of the great work by your New Orleans Police Department in June with help from the community we made 125 arrests for serious crimes from human trafficking to murder<sup>ci</sup>.

We ended a string of 8 armed robberies and car jackings, arresting 9 people<sup>cii</sup>. When there was a quadruple shooting in the East our detectives got to work and arrested the perpetrators. And last week when two tourists were brutally assaulted in the French Quarter - it took us 72 hours to arrest the four perpetrators. Meanwhile, on the other side of town at nearly the same time officers were making a separate arrest for a Gert Town murder. And earlier today, federal agents and NOPD officers tracked down and arrested two people for the June murder of an armored truck driver during a robbery.

Under the most difficult of circumstance NOPD is out there working hard – all day, every day. But more needs to be done to hire more police and retain our current officers long-term.

Yes, it is true that during the NOPD reform process we lost a lot of officers, and to avoid bankruptcy, we paused hiring for 18-months. We began hiring again in 2012 and have for the last five years been doing so aggressively. By 2018 we will have graduated 14 recruit classes, adding nearly 400 new officers. cvi

We have already raised pay for officers by 15%<sup>cvii</sup> and have invested over \$100 million for public safety facilities including new police stations<sup>cviii</sup>. We're also buying 300 new take home police cars, which will raise morale and increase overnight visibility throughout the city. NOPD will also buy 300 new long guns so we can be fully prepared for a terrorist attack or an active shooter, God forbid.

The bottom line is: now the whole department is better paid; better trained; better managed, and far better equipped. And we will continue to invest.

Yesterday I announced a new proposal to give another across the board pay bump to officers. We're asking Civil Service and the City Council to approve targeted raises for patrol officers, 10% raises for new officers, over 15% increase for Sergeants and nearly 20% more for Lieutenants. This is all about turbocharging recruitment and retaining our veteran officers.

We're also proposing a long overdue change to how patrol officer rankings work and how detectives get promoted. Indeed, for too long, to get more pay or a higher rank, detectives had to leave their unit. We need to change that so detectives can stay doing the work they love and still advance their career, while we as a city get to keep our seasoned investigators doing what they do best.

But here is the truth about making New Orleans safe and growing the department. Even as we do everything we can to boost morale and attract more recruits... if the people of New Orleans want more police; we need less talk and more action.

We need our best and bravest in this city to go to joinnopd.com and fill out an application. You need to show up.

Step up to the plate and become a police officer. Respond to the call for duty. Your city needs you.

Violent crime traumatizes not only the immediate victims but the entire community as well – both young and old alike. It hurts us, scares us and causes us to fear each other.

Although we have suffered with one of the highest crime rates in the nation for generations – this need not be our destiny. It can be fixed. We can change. We must change. And it will take every one of us because this time the enemy is not overseas.

It is not the Syrian refugee; it is not the undocumented immigrant. The murderer, the carjacker, the robber, the drug dealer, the drug overdoser; these are our sons and daughters; our brothers and sisters and even our mothers and fathers. They are our neighbors. They live here with us.

It was not a stranger who one day in 2012 shot up a kid's birthday party killing; five year old Briana Allen and Shawanna Pierce. It was not an outsider who shot and killed 2-year old Jeremy Galmon back in 2010. It was not some mysterious perpetrator who last week led State Police on a high speed race that resulted in three deaths, including a 2 year old. We know these people.

This starts in the home. Parents, relatives, friends, you have to help the streets back. The young perpetrators are known. They are putting everyone in harm's way. And it is always after the fact that we suddenly snap to attention - instead of swinging into action now. Then maybe we can prevent the next terrible death.

It is time we take responsibility for those doing wrong and say 'enough'. One of the most powerful groups that have stepped forward to deliver this message is mothers who have lost sons and daughters to gun violence.

They have meant so much to our work around murder reduction. This group of incredible women not only shares their stories of tragedy and loss, but also the promise of what can be IF the shooting is replaced by peace.

One mother recently called on every mother, father, grandparent and relative to take real responsibility for their children. To call out bad behavior when it's happening and to take a stand against actions and activities you may see that could lead to negative outcomes for their children or someone else's children.

This is sound advice from those who are as close to this issue as anyone can be, and if it is followed and we continue as a city to invest in opportunities for those most challenged, we will continue to mount the best fight possible to end the culture of violence and create the city of peace that we all want.

Otherwise, we will struggle to make progress on this problem that has been with us for a very, very long time. It runs deep.

But the question is are you New Orleans ready and willing to do what is necessary? To do as President Kennedy said – "pay any price, bear any burden".

Where there is no justice, there is no peace. We have to become a just city, if we want to be a peaceful city. Think about it. Don't get angry. Just think!

In closing, let me say that this fall's elections are one of the most important of our lifetime and so I will be fully engaged and very active; ready not only to sprint through the finish line of my own term, but also speak the truth about the challenges we face and what should come next.

We have fixed a lot. Our city is headed in the right direction. Our foundation is strong for the future. But there is hard work that remains to be done.

If there were a simple, readily available solution to our complicated problems, we would have already done it. And I would remind all the candidates something that I hope they already know.

The people of New Orleans are really smart. They know this city. New Orleanians know what needs to be done.

The 'what' is the easy part. The candidates need to tell us <u>how</u> they plan to take on these difficult challenges.

<u>How</u> they will do what they say they want to do. <u>How</u> they will pay for it. <u>How</u> long it will take to get done. <u>How</u> will it look when it is finished. That means details, not sound bites.

After 7 years of hard work, we are now reaping the benefits of some of the foundational changes we've made. Brain gain. Top places for millennials. One of the most improved places for businesses. Silicon Valley on the Bayou.

Nearly \$8 billion of new investments<sup>cxiv</sup>. 20,000 new jobs<sup>cxv</sup>. Record number of visitors. <sup>cxvi</sup> Record tonnage at the port. <sup>cxviii</sup> Record public investment. <sup>cxviiii</sup> Record high property values. <sup>cxix</sup> And more.

Our challenge for the next year and beyond is to continue this progress. Build on what is a strong foundation. Go forward, not backward.

Let me say that it has been the greatest honor of my life to serve as your Mayor. Always remember - together, we are the ones who rebuilt this broken city.

Together, we have laid a solid foundation for the future and are now positioned for growth like never before. Together, we are the ones who came back strong when no one thought we could.

Promises made, promises kept. Our feet may be weary but our soul is strong.

The way we end is the way we began: strong!

One team, one fight, one voice, one city... one step.

The future is ours for the taking. Our best days are ahead of us.

Let's get back to work.

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calculation includes upcoming street/sewer work, the airport, CNO capital projects and other public
infrastructure investment
<sup>lxvii</sup> Calculation includes all public investments (CNO, S&WB, schools, etc.). Not counting massive
investment in citywide levees.
lxviii Calculation includes all public investments (CNO, S&WB, schools, etc.) Not counting massive
investment in citywide levees.
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